

SCOTLAND'S STORY

37

**Building a New
Town worthy of
Scotland's capital**

**Truth behind the
Ossian debate**

**When business
began with a few
bottles of claret**

**Independence was
saved by the law**

**Rob Roy: rustler,
blackmailer and
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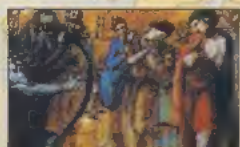


1754
Ebenezer Erskine, co-founder of the Secession Church and symbol of Kirk schism, dies.

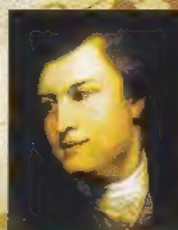


Orkney

NORTH
SEA



1760
James Macpherson's 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry' cause a storm of interest at home and abroad.



1765
Poems of Ossian released by Macpherson as doubts rise over their authenticity.

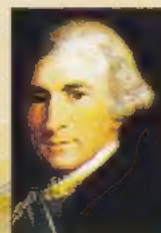
1773

Cromarty's elegant court house is a model of small town development.



1774

Robert Adam designs the first great New Town building, Register House

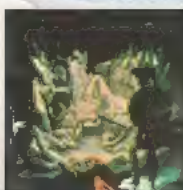


1802
Hugh Miller, famous documenter of changes in Cromarty life, is born.



1792

Edinburgh's elegant Charlotte Square is designed by Robert Adam.



1813
Ingres completes the Romantic 'The Dream of Ossian'.



1825

The neo-classical Royal Institution is built at the foot of Edinburgh's Mound.

**In Part 38:
Rabbie Burns**

PART OF
IRELAND

North
Channel

PART OF
ENGLAND



CONTENTS

4 The poems of Ossian

James Macpherson's *Ossian* caused a storm of controversy at home but his work had a huge impact on the European artistic and literary scenes. By Professor William Ferguson.

8 Edinburgh: Athens of the North

The planners of Edinburgh's New Town wanted to create a city that would be a model of neo-classical magnificence and reason. They succeeded. By Professor Charles McKean, Dundee University.

12 Small town splendour

The 'new town' of Cromarty provides a perfect illustration of how, 200 years ago Scotland's small towns, too, witnessed great civic and architectural achievement. By David Alston, the Cromarty Museum.

14 Architect who built a reputation

Scotland's Robert Adam was the most talented and high profile architect in late 18th-century Britain. By Charles McKean.

15 Eating and interiors

In the Enlightenment age, rising incomes and a new social order signalled a revolution in domestic life. By Professor Stana Neneditch, Edinburgh University.

18 Divisions shatter Kirk unity

The schisms that have characterised much modern Kirk history are now often joked about, but were once deadly serious matters. By Professor Stuart J Brown, Edinburgh University.

20 Scotland's drouthy neebors

Drinking and drinking clubs were an essential part of life in Edinburgh and elsewhere in the 1700s. By Hamish Coghill.

22 Law and disorder

The system of Scots law that survived 1707 was not averse to handing out very public punishments to wrongdoers. By Dr Richard Finlay, Strathclyde University

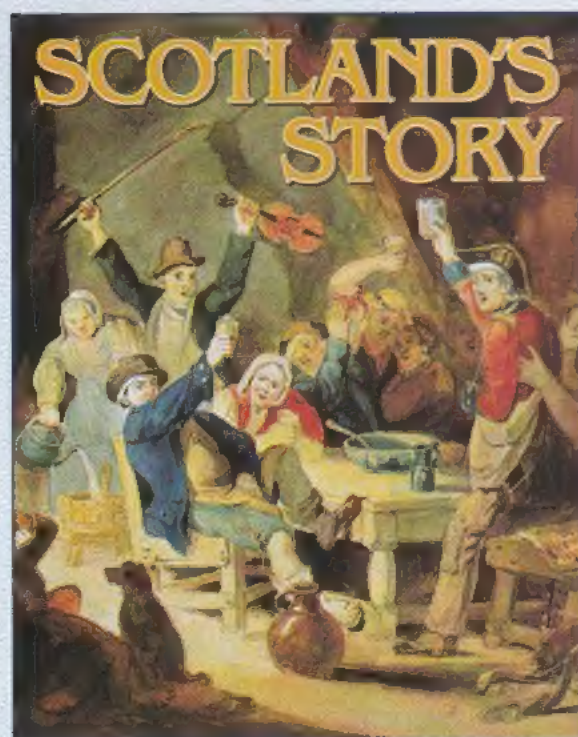
Features

26 Writers: Lewis Grassie Gibbon, Dorothy Dunnett and George MacDonald Fraser.

28 Rob Roy: He was a rogue and a cattle rustler, but he was a heroic leader for the 'Children of the Mist'.

30 Going Places: Biker historian David Ross takes on the ancient challenge of the legendary Gaelic warriors.

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COVER: The Jolly Beggars, by an unknown artist, shows a typical scene in an 18th century Scots tavern.

Ancient bard causes a storm

According to Gaelic mythology, Ossian was an ancient bard who recounted the life and deeds of a legendary leader named Finn mac Coul and his band of warriors, the Fianna. These Ossianic poems and songs circulated for centuries in the Highlands before catching the attention of James Macpherson.

Born in Kingussie, Inverness-shire, Macpherson was for a while a tutor at Aberdeen University with a keen interest in Enlightenment neo-Classicism.

His upbringing and education combined to foster an interest in ancient Gaelic society.

Although he was a native Gaelic speaker, his knowledge was not sufficient for the task of collecting Ossianic material from the Highlands. For this, he enlisted the services of others. As well as the oral tradition, a key source of Macpherson's Ossianic material was written Medieval Gaelic manuscripts such as 'The Book of the Dean of Lismore'.

Macpherson's first collection of Ossianic 'translations', 'Fragments of Ancient Poetry', appeared in 1760 and made great waves among the literati of the Enlightenment.

'Fragments' was followed by

further works, described as 'epics' and presented in a distinctly Classical idiom.

By 1765, however, when Macpherson completed his *Poems of Ossian*, a storm of controversy had blown-up over the authenticity of his work. Those most dismissive of Gaelic culture, such as the Scottophobes David Hume and Samuel Johnson, were the most ardent critics.

Recent scholarship has shown that, while there is no question Macpherson embroidered and embellished his translations, the material presented – particularly 'Fragments' (1760) – was closely based on authentic originals circulating in oral and written form in the Highlands.


The authenticity debate aside, the impact of Macpherson's *Ossian* on European literature was immense and, in itself, a great achievement.

Edinburgh's New Town is probably the ultimate physical expression of Scotland's Enlightenment Age.

Today, visitors from across the world still flock to Scotland to marvel at the architecture of a city called the 'Athens of the North'.



■ The Dream of Ossian: Ingres portrayal, completed in 1813 for Napoleon's visit to Rome, depicts the blind bard summoning the heroes and gods of the ancient world.



OSSIAN: THE FIGHT GOES ON OVER AN EPIC CONTROVERSY

Seldom has the literary world known such venom as directed towards James Macpherson over his translations from the legendary Celtic bard. But was it unfair?

Few writers have had such controversial careers, both as man and as author, as James Macpherson (1736-96).

Born near Kingussie, in the Badenoch district of Inverness-shire, he was a native Gaelic speaker but untrained as a Gaelic scholar, and consequently his knowledge of Gaelic culture was limited.

Macpherson was educated at Aberdeen, first at King's College and latterly at Marischal, before becoming for a short time a tutor. His fame, and to some his infamy, as an author rested on his 'Poems of Ossian' (1765), which he claimed to have translated from the surviving works of a 3rd-century Caledonian bard called Ossian.

Macpherson made out that his 'Poems of Ossian' were fragments of an ancient epic poem that was fit to be compared with Homer or Virgil. In spite of receiving great praise at first, in a few years some critics condemned his work as a fraud. This was the line taken by Dr Samuel Johnson in his 'A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland' (1775).

Johnson dismissed 'The Poems of Ossian' as spurious and also held Scottish Gaelic culture to be non-existent.

There were, he insisted, no Scottish Gaelic manuscripts because Gaelic "never was a written

language." The Gaelic manuscripts of which Macpherson and others boasted were all, he believed, Irish. It seems Johnson did not know that Irish, or Erse, was the name given by Lowlanders to Scottish Gaelic.

Johnson also discounted any possibility that oral tradition could have carried 'Ossian' through so many centuries. He was rather dismissive of oral tradition altogether.

Johnson's adverse criticism of Ossian long became the verdict of English Literature on James Macpherson, and indeed is still current in certain quarters today.

What are the facts? Was there an Ossianic poetry of any vintage to translate at all? There certainly was.

For example, the manuscript 'Book of the Dean of Lismore', which was compiled in the early 16th century, contains some of the traditional Ossianic ballads from the Medieval period which circulated in Ireland and Scotland.

Those poems derived from the Old Irish Fenian cycle, which recounted the deeds of the mythical Finn mac Coul (or Fingal as Macpherson called him) and, with others like them, were still carried in oral tradition in the Highlands in Macpherson's time, a fact of which he must have been well aware.

Indeed, they were being collected from 1739 onwards by the Reverend ►



■ James Macpherson was only 25 when he worked on the controversial poems.

► Alexander Pope, minister of Reay. Even more to the point, the first ever translation of an Ossianic poem, by Jerome Stone, schoolmaster in Dunkeld, was printed in 'The Scots Magazine' of January, 1756.

Stone gave a free translation to make the piece more palatable to an 18th-century English readership. The best expert opinion today, however, exonerates Stone from any charges of literary deceit or imposture, especially since he preserved the Gaelic original that he had heard recited.

It has been well said of Jerome Stone that he was 'the real discoverer to modern knowledge of the ancient Ossianic ballads'. Macpherson must also have been aware of this and homed in on Ossian. Possibly, too, he had consulted Stone's manuscripts.

The second question that needs to be asked is this: what are the correct principles of translation? There is no

easy answer. A literal word-for-word version may kill the original, and of this examples are legion.

Edward Fitzgerald wrote a fine poem, 'The Rubaiyat', which does not slavishly adhere to Omar Khayyam's original Persian. Stone used rhyme which was not a feature of the Ossianic ballads, but which 18th-century taste considered essential to poetry.

The great English poet Alexander Pope used heroic couplets to translate Homer, and to modern taste the effect is excruciatingly monotonous.

In his 'Ossian', Macpherson used measured prose which many at the time found a relief from the weariness induced by the mechanical heroic couplet.

But trained classicist that he was, Macpherson fully subscribed to John Dryden's theory that epic was the true sublime of poetry, and he frequently drew on Homer and



■ Ossian caught the imagination of artist Alexander Runciman whose sketch for Ossian's Hall, Penicuik, shows the bard enthraling an ancient gathering.

Virgil. What he did was to collect some Ossianic ballads and string them together with numerous passages of his own to form 'epics'.

Thus 'Fingal', the first of his 'Poems of Ossian', published in 1762, describes one of the wars of Finn mac Coul, the great hero of the Fenian cycle. This was too much for sceptics like Dr Johnson and his contemporary, the poet Charles Churchill, who in a bitter satire on Scotland wrote:

*Ossian, sublimest, simplest Bard of all,
Whom English infidels, Macpherson call.*

It is, however, well known that both Johnson and Churchill were infected by the Scottophobia that was then rampant in England. It is obvious, too, that neither knew anything about Gaelic poetry.

It is not easy to reach a just estimate of Macpherson and his 'Poems of Ossian', but it seems clear that the people who were completely nonsensical were his English critics and their Scottish henchmen like John Pinkerton.

Pinkerton mounted a furious attack on Macpherson and his supporters. A learned man with a twisted mind, he hated Celts and argued that the true ancestors of the Scots were the Picts whom he regarded as Gothic-speaking supermen.

The Celts, he believed, were feckless savages, mere Hottentots. For Pinkerton's contentions there was not a shred of evidence. But so bitter and so prolonged was the controversy that in 1805 the

Highland Society issued an exhaustive report on 'The Poems of Ossian'.

It found that Macpherson had treated the Gaelic poems in a very free and selective fashion, that he had added to them much verse of his own, and that of an epic there was no trace whatever.

Modern research by expert Gaelic scholars has confirmed and reinforced that verdict. Macpherson did not help his cause by being evasive about his Gaelic originals.

It is also worth noting that references to the Ossianic cycle occur in the works of the Medieval Scots makars, from John Barbour's 'Bruce' in the late 14th century to William Dunbar, Gavin Douglas and Sir David Lindsay in the 16th.

'The Book of the Dean of Lismore' illustrates even more evocatively the widespread popularity of the Ossianic poetry by preserving important examples of it.

The Protestant reformer, John Carswell, in the first book to be printed in Gaelic – his translation of John Knox's 'Book of Common Order' – in 1567 urged all good Christians to renounce the errors of popery and give up also the worldly tales 'about the heroes and Fionn mac Cumhaill [Finn mac Coul] with his warriors.'

Fingal, Ossian and the rest were in fact mythical characters who embodied the Gaelic ideal of the noble and the heroic, and were analogous in some ways to King Arthur and his knights. Nonetheless,

Macpherson and Stone believed that Fingal and his warriors were real figures of the 3rd century AD, and that Ossian recounted their deeds in stirring verse.

In the light of all this evidence, how can James Macpherson possibly be regarded as the only begetter of Ossian? It should be remarked also that the refined manners and lofty sentiments so often objected to in Macpherson's 'Poems of Ossian' are not entirely absent from the traditional Ossianic ballads.

Indeed, Macpherson, possibly keening for the traditional Highland way of life before Culloden, faithfully produced the melancholy strain that is often found in the Ossianic ballads.

So much has been said against Macpherson's 'Poems of Ossian' that the work's tremendous influence is sometimes unjustly neglected.

Recent research has emphasised Ossian's seminal importance in the emergence of the dominant cultural movement of the late 18th and early 19th centuries – Romanticism.

Why was this? Macpherson was the end product of a growing interest in Gaelic conceived of as one of the oldest languages in Europe. That view was shared by Jerome Stone and some of the literati of Edinburgh, particularly Professor Hugh Blair and his friends.

They were the people who did so much to help fund Macpherson's Highland researches. Macpherson's activities reflect closely the tradition of collecting and printing old Scots poetry which had operated since the early 18th century.

It is, therefore, not surprising that by the mid-18th century efforts to do likewise in Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland should begin to gain ground. Macpherson fits into that tradition, just as surely as Robert Burns does in Scots.

The 'Poems of Ossian' also appealed to those who were tiring of the Age of Reason and insisting on the importance of emotion to the human psyche, as David Hume was arguing. 'Ossian', too, was eagerly seized upon by those who were interested in the new cult of 'primitivism' that was associated with Jean Jacques Rousseau.

The bland politeness of the Age of Reason was beginning to pall and Macpherson's Ossian came as an



■ Highland apparition: in this engraving from Macpherson's first edition the ghost of Crugal appears to Connal before battle.

inspiration to those who were growing tired of the monotony of reams of heroic couplets, even when the couplets were handled with the virtuosity of an Alexander Pope.

Ossian, in fact, was one of the most powerful promoters of the Romantic movement that was dawning in Western Europe. In the British Isles this led to a resurgence of interest in the Celtic past, not of Scotland only, but also of Ireland and Wales, though many Welsh and Irish cognoscenti were put off by Macpherson's view of history.

On the Continent the effect of Ossian was, if anything even more marked, and not so impeded by adverse criticism. In Germany Goethe (in the 'Sorrows of Young Werther'), Herder and Schiller all admired and responded to Ossian. Translations into the main European languages soon followed.

Napoleon, too, was a great

admirer of Ossian and, for his own militaristic purposes, favoured his cult. Nearer home the influence of Macpherson's Ossian can be detected in the poetry of Robert Burns, Wordsworth and Byron.

Macpherson's subsequent political career as a slavish devotee of government and his business activities also raised controversy.

Installed in London, he shared the unpopularity of his patron, the Earl of Bute, prime minister and butt of the savage invective of John Wilkes. Latterly, he enriched himself as agent for the Nabob of Arcot.

This phase of his existence did not endear him to Dr Johnson who regarded him as a corrupt 'Scotchman on the make'. The truth is, however, that most able men of humble birth in 18th-century Britain were on the make. Macpherson, in John Bull's eyes, compounded his sins by being a rather indolent and

inert MP for Camelford in Cornwall from 1780 until his death.

Macpherson's further literary efforts failed to improve his image in England. After 'The Poems of Ossian' he no longer wrote on Highland themes as such. He wrote voluminously on history, but most of his work was frowned upon for its partiality to the House of Stewart.

Given his background this is not surprising, for his father was closely related to the noted Jacobite of the '45, Cluny Macpherson.

Indeed, on the restoration of the forfeited Jacobite estates in 1784, the lands of Cluny were offered by the government to James Macpherson, but they were refused by him in favour of the rightful heir, Duncan Macpherson.

One of James Macpherson's historical works, however, proved to be of considerable value as a rich quarry of material. This was a collection of documents entitled 'Original Papers', containing the 'Secret History of Great Britain' 1660-1714 (1775), which still retains some residual value.

Towards the end of his life Macpherson retired to his native Badenoch, where he bought an estate near Kingussie and had the Adam brothers build for him a fine mansion, which he called Belleville, later known as Balavil. Deploping the decline of clanship and the onset of clearances, he ran his estate on traditional paternalist lines and protected his tenants from exploitation. He hated sheep and refused to evict people to create sheep-runs.

Popular in his native Highlands and revered by his tenants, James Macpherson, a good-natured man and familiarly known as Seamus Ban, died at Belleville on February 17, 1796 (the same year in which Burns died). One of his grieving tenants, a local poet of some note, Dunnachadh Gobha, wrote a fine Gaelic elegy on him.

At his own request and expense James Macpherson was buried at Westminster Abbey. He never married but had numerous liaisons in England and had two sons and two daughters.

As he characteristically put it: 'I hate John Bull, but I love his daughters'.

Macpherson's two sons died childless, and eventually the estate went to one of his daughters, Juliet, who in 1810 married the Scottish physicist, Sir David Brewster. Their descendants, known as Brewster-Macphersons, inherited Balavil. ●

Arise! A new town

Prosperity came with peace and Edinburgh was bursting at the seams. The time had come to develop grandly

The New Town of Edinburgh is perhaps the finest built example of classical, rationalist town planning to be found in the world. In September, 1751, after a tenement collapsed opposite the Mercat Cross on the Royal Mile, a survey of the entire city revealed that much was in a dangerous condition. Some 23,500 people huddled within the old city boundary at a density, it is said, rising to 700 persons per acre. Earlier proposals to extend

Edinburgh across the Nor' Loch had come to nothing.

Prompted by Lord Provost George Drummond, a small group chaired by Sir Gilbert Elliott of Minto met in a tavern to discuss the capital's future. The result was a set of Proposals, which they presented to the Convention of Royal Burghs in 1752. The Proposals, one of the purest documents to emerge from the Enlightenment, oozed reason.

Now that the 'rage of faction' (the '45) was over, Edinburgh needed to

improve itself. Construction would enhance the economy, and a well-ordered society would be better socially segregated, rather than live hugger-mugger in what Minto's group called the 'vertical streets' of the Old Town tenements.

Since part of Edinburgh's problem, as they saw it, lay in the fact that Scots aristocrats preferred to live in London than in Edinburgh, they proposed the construction of an aristocratic suburb on land to be purchased to the north, laid out with

■ Up she goes: Alexander Nasmyth's painting of 1825 catches the atmosphere on the young Princes Street as the Royal Institution is built at the foot of the Mound. The figure pointing at the bottom left is architect William Playfair directing operations.



worthy of a capital

regular streets and squares like the new suburbs then emerging in London. It was to be 'thinly inhabited... and that too by persons of considerable rank'.

All people of professional status or below were to remain behind in the Old Town, as were all places of commerce and entertainment.

Not long before he died, Lord Provost Drummond changed his vision of the proposed New Town from an aristocratic suburb to becoming 'a splendid and

magnificent city'. Nonetheless, the town plan that emerged was that of a suburb.

In 1763, the North Bridge was constructed, and in 1766 the Town Council put the design of the New Town out to competition. It was won by James Craig, a relatively unknown and youngish architect, who used this opportunity to proclaim his 'North British' credentials.

His first design, therefore, was in the form of a Union Jack, which required regularising and re-ordering

into the regular streets and squares stated in the brief. He then dedicated his proposal to the King, as a plan for 'new streets and squares for his ancient capital of North Britain'.

Never! Edinburgh had been the capital of Scotland, and was now a provincial city. To win the King's favour, changes were made to the street names, either in reflection of the King's own family – there was George, Frederick, Princes, Queen, and Hanover streets, and Charlotte Square (after the Queen) – or the Union being hinted at by the two lesser streets christened Thistle and Rose.

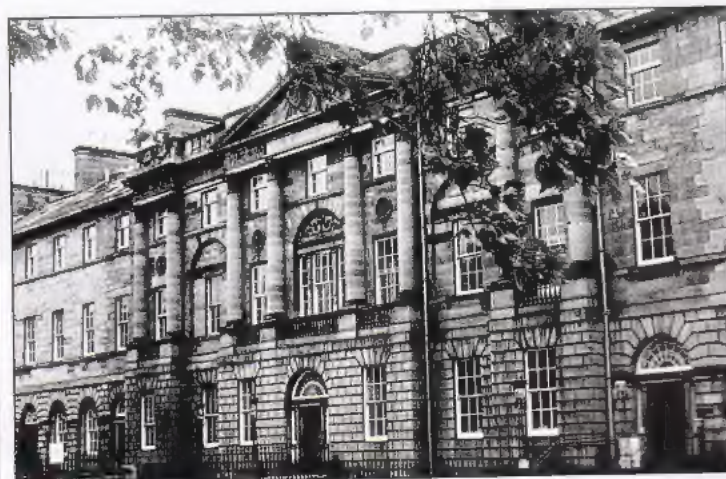
The layout of the new town was entirely suburban. The main, over-wide axis – George Street – terminates in a large private square east and west, in contrast to the open, grid-iron layout of Glasgow and the American

the New Town developed westwards, the regularity and order of the first streets began to break down as individual owners competed with their neighbours in elaborate façades.

So the council looked to Robert Adam for a unified design for the western square. Designed in 1792, Charlotte Square was the most distinguished achievement of the first New Town.

A second New Town downhill designed by Robert Reid with William Sibbald was begun in 1801. Marginally larger than the first, it also had a principal central street – Great King Street – with parallel lesser streets, and lanes behind. A large square at the eastern end was balanced by a circus at the west.

The third New Town, which crept round the eastern side of Calton Hill, designed by William Stark and



■ The North side of Charlotte Square is an Adam masterpiece.

cities, which could be extended endlessly.

Parallel streets north and south were single-sided. There was no civic forum, no space for normal civic activities, no commercial streets, and no place to riot. Only terraced houses on the principal streets, with tenement flats disguised to look like terraced houses on the cross streets.

The church that was intended to close the George Street vista eastwards was supplanted by the mansion of Sir Lawrence Dundas of Kerse, whilst its partner at the western end was built in 1814 by Robert Reid.

Construction began at the east end and accelerated after 1785. As

William Playfair, rejected the rigid order of the first two and took advantage of contour, view, and happy accident.

James Gillespie Graham, for the Earl of Moray, conceived the fourth New Town on the cliffs of the Water of Leith from 1821. The Moray Estate was laid out as a circus, an ellipse and a crescent. Since virtually no street faced another, thus trapping the wind and creating a micro-climate, the Moray Estate is one of the most sheltered places in the New Town of Edinburgh.

The final New Town was created on the lands to the west – focused upon Melville Street. The classical ►



■ Even in winter Charlotte Square, where the first New Town finished with a flourish, is an Edinburgh jewel.

► discipline begun with Craig's first New Town in 1767, however, remained almost intact with only subtle changes for the next 70 years.

The New town had originally been intended to be a residential suburb for people of a certain rank and fortune. It failed to attract the aristocrats back from London in any number, and its new houses and flats were occupied by the professional classes from the Old Town.

Far from excluding entertainment, the first building to be occupied, in a most prominent position beside North Bridge, was the Theatre Royal. The Assembly Rooms in George Street followed under 20 years later, and shops had

appeared in Princes Street by the late 1780s. By 1820, Princes Street had become the premier shopping street of the Capital.

The New Town was no longer an adjunct to a city whose centre remained in the Royal Mile – bit by bit it was becoming the centre of the city itself, fulfilling Drummond's vision of a 'new and magnificent city'. Young aristocrats, prevented from taking their normal Grand Tour through Europe at the end of the 18th century, as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, found Edinburgh an acceptable substitute.

Edinburgh's New Town emerged as the 'Modern Athens', or the 'Athens of the North'. No matter

how much Londoners mocked the pretension, not only did the nickname stick, but also neo-classical Edinburgh became one of Europe's principal tourist destinations.

The suburb to the north lacked the major civic monuments needed to become a splendid and magnificent city, and its streets were already full of houses. The only spaces for such monuments were at the edge, Calton Hill, to the east, and on the Mound at the middle.

In 1817, a subscription was raised to build a National Monument – a Valhalla for the dead of the Napoleonic Wars – on the top of Calton Hill. They opted for a replica of the Parthenon, designed by the

As those who could afford a New Town house crossed the North Bridge in increasing numbers, the Old Town began to fall on hard times

Grecian expert Charles Cockerell, assisted by the young Edinburgh architect William Playfair, to create a building of such absolute Grecian purity that it would act as a model for all others to follow.

Funds ran only to the columns of the western façade, Playfair was commissioned then to design an Observatory nearby, in the form of a cruciform temple.

The crowning neo-classical building at this end of town was the Royal High School, designed by Thomas Hamilton in 1829 as a series of pavilions leading up to an imposing Doric temple grandly facing south to Arthur's Seat.

The eastern entrance to new Edinburgh was crowned by a magnificent bridge over the former Leith Wynd, and the triumphal gateway into Princes Street from Waterloo Place framed by two magnificent gables by Archibald Elliott.

The other two principal civic monuments of Modern Athens lay on the Mound: the Royal Institution (now the Royal Scottish Academy) designed by William Playfair from 1822 and, uphill to the rear, the National Galleries of Scotland designed by Playfair in 1851.

They make a striking contrast. The RSA is immensely austere, in the purest of Grecian Doric with colonnades of fluted columns, massive pediments and powerful carvings. The National Galleries, built of a different, pinker stone, is more delicate.

As the New Town of Edinburgh became the new heart of the Capital, the Old Town sank commensurably. When the scandal of the Burke and Hare murders erupted in 1827, Walter Scott noted ruefully in his diary how he had taken a carriage round places in the West Port where he had spent his

TIMELINE

1752

Proposals for the future of Edinburgh presented to the Convention of Royal Burghs.

1758

Visionary Scots architect Robert Adam publishes a book of his drawings of the palace of Roman Emperor Diocletian.

1760

James Macpherson's stylised Ossian translations, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, is published.

1763

Edinburgh's North Bridge constructed, making link with site of proposed New Town.

1765

Macpherson's collected *Poems of Ossian* cause bitter debate in Britain but are received to great acclaim across rest of Europe.

1766

Edinburgh's Town Council put New Town design out to tender.

1767

James Craig's classical design chosen for 'first' New Town.

1773

Robert Adam begins the major phase of his career, designing over 25 major country houses.

1785

Construction of the 'first' New Town begins at the East end.

1792

Named after the Queen, the New Town's Charlotte Square is built at the West end. The celebrated architect Robert Adam dies the same year.

1796

James 'Ossian' Macpherson dies at home on his Highland estate near Kingussie.

1801

A 'second' New Town designed by Robert Reid and William Sibbald begins construction.



■ Sir Lawrence Dundas's mansion in St Andrew Square is now headquarters of the Royal Bank of Scotland.

youth, ruminating with such horrors would be if people like him had the Old Town.

Robert Chambers was the last person of the Old Town. George of P. four left in the held a splendid part apartments in the.

Thus did the New Town become the new city centre. But that of a suburb and new street it had no meeting.

Secondly and more replaced the social int the Old Town by a strict hierarchy.

The inhabitants of Charlotte Square and Queen Street, lawyers and service people, Thistle/Young Street, craftsmen and suppliers in the Street, and household servants, coachmen and others in the lanes opening north and south were all distinguished by status.

In 1823, Lord Cockburn wrote that the New Town "demonstrates an unfortunate propensity to avoid whatever had distinguished the place we had fled from. Hence we were led into the blunder of long straight lines of street, divided to an inch

every house being an exact duplicate of its neighbour."

The New Town had dislocated the old habits of Edinburgh. "It has altered the style of living, obliterated local arrangements, and destroyed a thousand associations, which nothing but the still-preserved names of houses and places is left recalled. It was the rise of the New Town that obliterated our old peculiarities with greatest rapidity and effect."

The principal social rituals of Edinburgh took place in the New

Town. For example, the mid morning stroll up and down Princes Street, observed by your peers sitting in the increasing number of tea rooms lining the first floor of Princes Street buildings.

Although the New Town remained highly fashionable, particularly for professional people, during the 19th and early 20th century George Street became gradually as commercialised as Princes Street, and professional offices seeped into Charlotte Square and, eventually, into Melville Street.

Rutland Square, on the north side of the railway tracks, never maintained its quality once the Caledonian Railway arrived. By the 1960s, however, there were signs typical of inner-city decay – large houses subdivided, and a concentration of young single people with social problems.

In 1972 the Edinburgh New Town Conservation Committee was established to begin a programme of physical repair and urban regeneration, whose success was such that a comparable organisation was begun in the Old Town in 1988.

Both merged into the World Heritage Trust in 1999. Although much changed, the New Town remains the preferred residential location in the capital nearly 200 years after it was first begun. ●



■ Iron railings and balconies are still a feature on Melville Street.

'Middling sort' force wee toun changes



Crowsteps were out, skewputts were coming in and slowly fine houses began to arrive. Walled gardens, better lighting, even orchards put in an appearance

Despite the growth of the major urban centres Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Dundee – late 18th-century Scotland was still, in many ways, a country of small towns. This is easily forgotten, partly because our perceptions have changed and we find it difficult to recognise that settlements of between 1,000 and 2,000 inhabitants were towns, rather than villages – and that even smaller places often had urban characteristics.

In the 1790s there were almost 120 such small towns, each with over 1,000 inhabitants, scattered throughout Scotland.

They had a variety of roles. Many were markets for the surrounding countryside, which was being transformed by agricultural improvements.

Others were centres for textile manufacturing, which still depended

on armies of women spinning yarn at home

Some coastal settlements had fishing fleets and those with good harbours were major distribution centres – since the transport of goods was mainly by sea. Established county towns had administrative functions, which required courts, prisons and meeting rooms. And some found new roles as health spas or by specialisation in some trade.

Small towns grew, in part, because Scotland's population in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was increasingly mobile. This was largely the result of agricultural improvement, which gathered pace after 1760 and was given renewed drive by high grain prices, from the mid-1790s until 1815 – during the French and Napoleonic wars.

The creation of larger, more efficient, improved farms displaced the majority of those who had, until

then, had a stake in the rural economy of the fertile lowlands

These 'lowland clearances' – as they have been called – created a drift towards the cities and an increase in emigration. However, the first move was more commonly to a small town, which gave many rural Scots their first experience of urban life

A key influence in all Scottish urban settlements, large and small, were those people who regarded themselves as the 'middling sort' – an emerging middle class who distinguished themselves from the land-owning class above and the labouring classes below

In Scotland's small towns, the 'middling sort' consisted of prosperous farmers, local merchants, the more successful tradesmen, minor members of the landed families and an increasing body of professional men and their

families. These professionals were employed, for example, as schoolmasters, in government service as customs, excise and fisheries officers, and in the growing network of Scottish banks.

The 'middling sort' had the means to pay for better schools, bought more luxury goods from local retailers and established an active social life through coffee houses, reading clubs, taverns and respectable sports, such as golf.

The 'middling sort' left their mark in new patterns of housing, which separated the middle class from the

relied on home-based spinning by a further 600 women. The factory (or 'proto-factory') used hemp imported from St Petersburg to weave sacking, which was shipped to London for use in trade with the West Indies. The survival of the factory buildings is a useful reminder that industrial development was not, initially, restricted to Scotland's central belt.

In its heyday, Cromarty was an important distribution centre – or, in the language of the time, an 'emporium' – because it had a substantial harbour (1781–84)



■ Times have altered for Cromarty harbour but once it did brisk business as an outlet for the town's brewery and hand-loom factory.

labouring classes and displayed their commitment to order and rationality. There is an interesting parallel here between the large-scale creation of Edinburgh's ordered New Town and a small scale development of more elegant housing in Scotland's small towns.

An excellent example of this is Cromarty, situated at the tip of the Black Isle peninsula north of Inverness. Cromarty flourished between the 1770s and the 1830s, with its population rising to a peak of over 2,000 in 1831. Its subsequent decline and the lack of major later development have left intact many of the physical characteristics of a small Scottish town of the period.

Moreover, everyday life in the town in the early 19th century was recorded by the polymath Hugh Miller in both his early journalism and in his autobiography 'My Schools and Schoolmasters'.

Cromarty is also a useful case study because it was a settlement with many functions. Cromarty's buildings, for example, provide evidence of the early stages of the industrial revolution in Scotland. Its large, hand-loom factory (c.1770) employed over 200 workers and

within the sheltered waters of the Cromarty Firth. It also boasted the largest brewery in the north and, as the county town for Cromarty shire, it had an elegant courthouse (1773).

The drift of displaced Gaelic speakers from the surrounding countryside into this thriving Scots speaking town led, as in the Scottish cities, to the erection of a Gaelic chapel (1784).

However, it was the 'middling sort' who had the greatest influence on the growth and re-building of the town. Between the mid 1790s and the early 1830s new, stylish houses began to appear. These buildings were symmetrical and faced the street, unlike the older houses of the burgh, and often there was a flower garden in front.

They were lit by large, 12 pane sash and-case windows and there might be a 'fan light' above the main door. Many of these doors had simple, carved pediments and some had short flights of steps.

The gables no longer had what they would have regarded as crude, 'crowsteps' and there were decorative features such as moulded skewputts (the bottom stones of the gable skews) and date stones. Slate



■ Cromarty's old court house is a reminder of busier days.

roofs replaced thatch. Many houses were lime-harled and white-washed but there might be exposed bands of more costly dressed stone.

Private family life became more important, especially for middle-class women who were increasingly seen as 'domestic creatures' although they might also carry out charitable works in the community.

High walls began to be built around back gardens and orchards to create secluded spaces; and dining rooms and parlours, often on the better-lit first floor of the house, became places where the middle classes reinforced their social, professional and trade networks.

Two other factors were important in Cromarty's small-scale urbanisation. First, there were connections with 'ex-pats'. Many Scots were, by the early 19th century, successful in the Scottish cities, London and overseas in the Canadian fur trade, in American tobacco production, in sugar, cotton and coffee plantations in the Caribbean, and in the East India Company. Most preferred to

retain a link with the homeland, to which they might return.

One of Cromarty's largest, new houses was, by the 1820s, known as Clare Lodge, after its owner – Sir Michael Benignus Clare, physician general of Jamaica – and another was owned by Aeneas Barkly, a leading London sugar merchant. These contacts brought money to the town and enhanced its social status.

Finally, there were buildings erected by the town's thriving friendly societies. Almost every adult male in secure employment was a member of one or other of the lodges – the Freemasons, the Free Gardeners, the Wrights and Coopers or the Cromarty Friendly Society. Each had a substantial lodge building by the 1820s, characterised by large first-floor windows, which lit the meeting hall.

Only the masonic lodge remained in use after Cromarty's economic decline, but the others survived as reminders of another aspect of life in a small Scottish town. ●

Legacy of splendour

Adam put his stamp on Scotland with classic style and elegance

Robert Adam, one of the three greatest architects in Scotland, was the greatest architect in the world of Scottish architecture. He designed a small number of houses with his elder brother James, who succeeded to his practice in 1748. Robert left for Europe in 1754, and virtually exhausted his father's inheritance by staying in Rome for four years.

To his existing Scottish architectural training, Robert grafted on an understanding of Roman architecture, and new skills in composition and draughtsmanship.

Before returning to Britain in 1758, he measured up the Palace of the Roman Emperor Diocletian at Spalato (or Split) so that he could publish a book of drawings of the Palace as a means of promoting himself and his Roman sophistication.

Opening an office in London, he continued to work in Scotland, although brother John continued in Scotland.

His younger brother James soon joined him in London. He became particularly successful, principally under the patronage of the Scotsman Lord Bute, then British First Minister, thanks to whom he became, with William Chambers,

Architect of the King's Works.

For a short while, he was MP for Kinross. However, the collapse of the Adam brothers' Adelphi property speculation in London, which had to be bailed out by a lottery in 1773, appears to signal the beginning of a greater focus upon Scotland.

His work included over 25 major country houses – such as Newliston (Edinburgh), Oxenfoord Castle (Midlothian), Culzean Castle (Ayrshire), Gostord (East Lothian) and Mellerstam (Borders).

His castellated houses clutching picturesque crags were, in reality, highly fashionable late 18th century country houses and villas, with a romantic topcoat. He had, for example, been instructed by his client, Sir John Dalrymple, to take the existing chateau of Oxenfoord and to 'make it into even more of a castle than it was.'

Externally, many of their details derived from Adam's profound knowledge of Scottish architecture. Inside were brilliantly lit, elaborately decorated rooms in pastel colours, with rich plasterwork, painted panels, and specially-commissioned furniture and carpets as sophisticated as could be found in Europe.

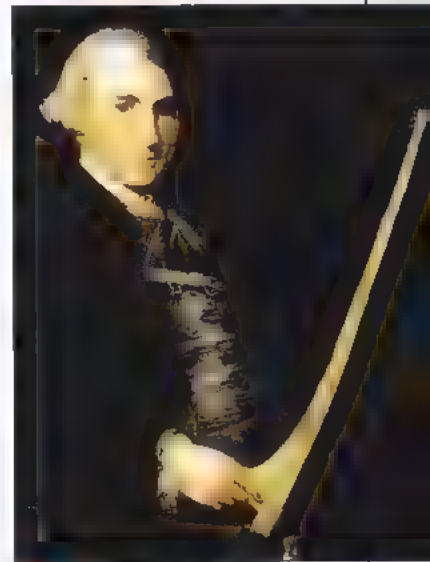
His urban buildings are particularly imposing. In parallel to substantial building in London, including Portland Place,

Fitzroy Square and the Adelphi, he produced several designs for Edinburgh, such as the ceremonial entrance from Leith, the South Bridge and a new bridge east from Princes Street to Calton Hill – the latter realised by others.

There followed a new university in 1789, and unexecuted designs for public buildings. He added the gracious Register House at the eastern end of the New Town to close the vista down North Bridge in 1774.

In 1792 he was invited by the Lord Provost to prepare a unifying design for the nine terraced houses on the north side of Edinburgh's Charlotte Square, and his sense of fun can be discerned from the lions' heads peering from roundels and the curvaceous sphinxes on the skyline.

His designs for Glasgow, probably with his brother James, are less well known although just as extensive. Most, however, remained unbuilt. In 1792 he designed the Glasgow Infirmary on the site of the Archbishop's Palace beside Glasgow Cathedral. The Professors' House on the High Street, the Glasgow Town Hall, and the Glasgow Free School were designed to form the west end of a new Corn Exchange at the far end of Shuttle Street. He also designed Glasgow's Tron Kirk with his brother James, in 1793, and his elaborate design for the Athenaeum or Assembly Rooms in Ingram Street was



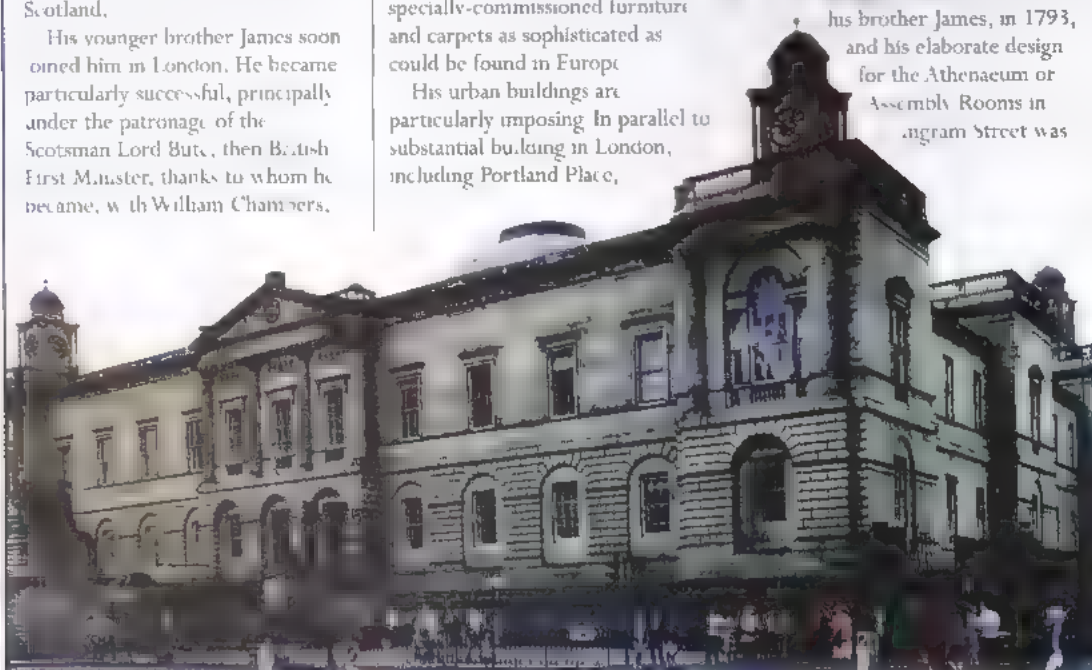
■ Robert Adam worked among the finest architects in the world and won their respect.

begun in 1796. Imposing street blocks for both George Square and Ingram Street may never have been built, and of the privately funded Stirling's Square, to the west of the High Street at the same time, only a token part – Babbity Bowster's – appears to have been built.

What Adam brought to Scottish architecture was the most refined European sophistication. He designed classical facades according to his theory of 'movement'. The façade of a building should project and recede so that it would always appear to be changing in sunlight, in the way sunlight dapples on the slopes of a distant field.

He inherited from his father a mastery of compact house-planning. His houses of Sunnyside (Edinburgh), Seton (East Lothian) and Walkinshaw (Renfrewshire) had all the necessary grand rooms, but without corridors. To this he added a sense of splendour best viewed at Edinburgh's Register House. One of the best examples in Edinburgh was the house designed for Lord Chief Baron Orde in Queen Street, now part of the headquarters of the Royal College of Physicians.

Adam never married. He enjoyed chasing serving wenches on a horse – and perhaps being chased in turn by a beautiful heiress in Rome, but he declared that he was married to architecture instead. ●



■ Register House, the first major work of Edinburgh's New Town, is magnificent, both inside and out.

Nice of you to come, an Edinburgh New Town welcome to a spacious, elegant diningroom as the classes begin to separate outside the congested Royal Mile tenements of the Old Town.

Eating goes exotic in best possible taste

Food mountains, strange fruits, salmon, veal, pheasant, beef, mutton, trout syllabubs - and that was just dinner. The new age brought new thinking to the dining table

Food and drink reveal a great deal about society in all ages. In the 18th century the majority of the Scottish population subsisted on a monotonous diet dominated by oatmeal and dairy products. But for the wealthy minority, particularly in towns, there was a transformation in eating habits.

Newly arrived and fashion were as equally important. There were new types of food, new drinks, changes in meal times and changes in the significance of meals. This consumer revolution also resulted in new ideas of organising and furnishing the dining room. These developments lay the foundations for the Scottish economy as it entered an age of modern industrial success. Surplus income was available for

spending on luxury foods such as white bread and fresh red meat as well as signs of good times - or imported commodities such as sugar, tea, coffee and chocolate. The development of the colonial trades introduced exotic fruits such as limes and pineapples and also new alcoholic drinks, notably rum.

The elite of Scotland's towns consisted of professionals like lawyers, clergymen and medical practitioners as well as substantial shopkeepers and prosperous tradesmen.

The most spectacular groups of the new wealthy were the colonial merchants, particularly the Glasgow and the Newcastle groups, who made their fortunes in the India trade. Distinct food habits were developed by both groups. The ritualised drinking of punch made

from rum, sugar and limes elaborately concocted in beautiful imported china punch bowls was a striking feature of social life among the great merchants of Glasgow.

The drink symbolised the mercantile connections and hospitality within business and friendship networks. A heavy drink was served at the present time. Native spirits were also served at this time. Native spirits were also served at this time. Native spirits were also served at this time.

The highest status furniture was made of the imported woods, particularly mahogany, which was also a symbol of the colonial trade. Native woods such as oak and elm went out of fashion.

For the 'nouveau riche', who had no claims to family prestige, the



■ The well off in their fine new houses turned to elegance in living, eating, furnishings and entertaining planned to the merest detail.

► house and its contents were increasingly important signs of social status. Classical styles of domestic architecture were introduced in the 'new town' suburban developments of both Glasgow and Edinburgh from the mid 18th century.

Previously the rich and poor had lived in close proximity at the centre of towns, often sharing a common stair in a tenement and both enjoying a similar outdoor social life.

But as towns expanded and street life seemed more threatening, there was a trend towards segregated living, with exclusive new areas for the rich which allowed a greater capacity for privacy – an important consideration in a cut-throat business world – and for indoor socialising.

Much of that socialising was built around conspicuous and costly domestic hospitality by men providing entertainment for their

business associates. The quantity and extravagance of the food consumed by the urban wealthy was astonishing when compared with the experience of ordinary men and women, and was often remarked by contemporaries – as in the following description by John Gibson Lockhart, the son-in-law of Sir Walter Scott, of a dinner party hosted by a Glasgow merchant in the early 19th century.

"The dinner was excellent, although calculated, apparently, for 40 people rather than for 16, which last number sat down."

"Capital salmon and trout almost as rich as salmon, from one of the lochs; prime mutton from Argyllshire, very small and sweet and indeed 10 times better than half the venison we see in London; beef of the very first quality; some excellent poultry; and a

old West India Madeira. After dinner we had two or three bottles of Port, abundance of the same Madeira. The moment [the ladies left the table] the butler and footman entered as if by instinct, the one with a huge punch-bowl, the other with the etceteras."

Changes in food and drink were paralleled by new tableware and eating utensils.

Specialised objects like tea pots, coffee cups or punch bowls were made in fashionable china, decorated with the latest designs and became status objects to impress family and friends.

Cutlery was revolutionised with the development of the fork. At the start of the 18th century plates and drinking vessels of pewter, earthenware or wood were usual.

Food was cooked on an open fire in a single cooking vessel and served in a single dish at the centre of a

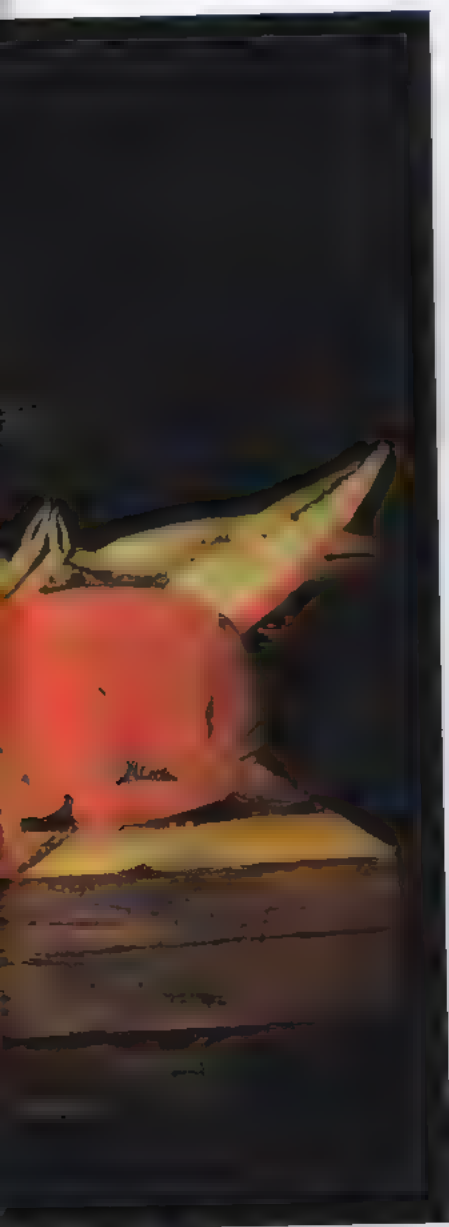
table. By the end of the century prosperous houses contained a remarkable proliferation of modern kitchen equipment and tableware, including silver, china and crystal.

There were new types of domestic ovens and cookery books were widely used. The presentation of elaborate meals in numerous courses – 'removes', required many more serving dishes and glasses than previously and many more servants to prepare and serve the food.

To have a specialised cook familiar with fashionable French cooking techniques, or a butler to wait at table, were valued signs of wealth and status among the urban elite.

Men with social aspirations sought to give the impression that their 'lady like' wives knew nothing of the kitchen or of ordinary housework.

As domestic hospitality grew in significance, the amount of time



■ In the privileged lifestyles even a bowl of fruit and flowers was a perfection of presentation or a painting.

required for dinner and there were... at which meals... early 18th... comprised breakfast at about... with dinner - the main meal... day in the early afternoon and a light supper in the evening.

But length... moved to a later hour... 19th century, the last... time was around 6pm and a... meal - the precursor... lunch - was introduced.

Directly connected with... importance of 'dinner... development in Scottish domestic interiors was the rise of the urban dining room. In the early 18th century, dining rooms only existed in the country houses of noblemen and gentry. In the tenement flats of the town elite, most rooms served

multiple purposes and modest entertaining was usually undertaken in the principal bedroom, where the finest bedstead and linen were displayed and a small table with half-a-dozen chairs was easily accommodated.

When large-scale domestic dining and drinking came into existence, a more specialised room was needed. A great mahogany dining table to seat 12 or 14 was now a feature of the new houses of the urban elite.

Tables of this sort were the most valuable item of furniture in the house and they dominated the dining room along with side boards providing display space for silverware and china. Costly mirrors and paintings, richly patterned carpets and wallpaper added to the air of luxury in this most masculine and status-loaded room in the house.

Another feature of 18th-century life was the development of gender-specific foods and drinks. Ideas of politeness and gentility were cultivated, giving rise to new codes of behaviour for men and women.

While men drank rum punch, brandy or imported wines - whisky was not a fashionable drink until the 1820s - women drank sweetened alcoholic drinks, notably tea and fruit cordials, or diluted sweet wines. Drunkenness and excessive eating among women became a

significant social taboo.

With men dominating the new dining room, the principal bedroom remained the favourite location for socialising among women. Elaborate linen and bedding were often part of a dowry and a wife was proud to display these to her friends. Such occasions were mostly afternoon or early evening tea parties, with the numbers involved rarely more than six or eight.

Unlike male hospitality, where the focus was on the consumption of meat and alcohol, hospitality among women was dominated by sweet pastries and delicate confectioneries such as lemon syllabub, along with ritualised tea making and drinking.

Card playing and musical performances by one of the daughters of the household were characteristic features of these parties.

At the very end of the 18th century a specialised female room - the drawing room - did develop in the large town houses of the very wealthy, again emulating the country houses of the landed elite.

Dining rooms were always on the ground floor, close to the kitchen and to the front door and public world beyond. The drawing room or 'with drawing' room was a more private room, located on the first-floor of a town house, close to

the principal bedroom and normally for reading, writing and other quieter pursuits than the masculine dining room, with more delicate furniture including musical instruments and a greater use of soft furnishings. The ambience of the drawing room was one that suggested refined femininity and comfort.

Complex hot food was not served in this room. It was designed to accommodate women when they departed the dining table at the end of a significant meal, leaving their menfolk behind to indulge in the serious business of drinking and toasting and discussing affairs of business or politics.

Men left the dining room to join their women in the drawing room at the end of an evening, when tea or coffee and sweets were commonly served.

For a man to enter a ladies' drawing room in a state of drunkenness was considered in polite circles to be a major infringement of propriety. Propriety was often offended.

The 18th-century consumer revolution in food and housing among Scotland's urban wealthy marked a major advance in comfort and pleasure for the privileged few.

It also defined some of the distinct characteristics of Scottish culture that have survived to the present. ●

Splits and factions bedevil the Kirk

The Church of Scotland hierarchy increasingly had its critics. Some even decided to go their own way

With the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688-89 to 1690, the Scottish Convention re-established Presbyterianism within the Church of Scotland, ending over a century of struggle between the supporters of Episcopal and Presbyterian forms of ecclesiastical government within Scotland's national Church.

For the Presbyterians, the Revolution was an act of God, restoring the true scriptural government to the national Church.

Godly discipline, they believed, would now be maintained uniformly throughout the country by Church courts made up of ministers and elders.

There would be no bishops, nor would the worldly monarch exercise authority over Christ's Church. The martyrs of the Covenant, who had perished on the hillsides or moors would not have died in vain.

Scotland would become a godly commonwealth, with one faith, defined by the Calvinist Westminster Confession of Faith.

And yet the Presbyterian triumph of 1690 proved short lived. For almost immediately, fissures appeared in the national Church. The vision of Scotland as a godly commonwealth, united under an authoritative national Church, faded and by the end of the 18th century, Scotland was home to a number of competing Christian communions.

The cracks in the ecclesiastical edifice appeared almost immediately as two groups of Scottish Protestants refused to join the reconstituted national Church.

First, perhaps surprisingly, there were the Cameronians. These staunch Covenanters took their name from Richard Cameron, who had been killed in 1680 while resisting rule by the 'uncovenanted' Charles II. The Cameronians had

supported the Revolution in 1688-89, raising a regiment that had helped to secure the Presbyterian triumph.

They had then expected the post-1690 Church to renew its adherence to the Covenants. But more moderate voices predominated and the Covenants were not renewed.

In response, the bulk of the Cameronians refused to join the 'uncovenanted' Church. The established Church had the authority not to attempt to suppress these hillside people, and their secession marked a small, but significant blow.

The other group that separated were the Episcopalians, those who had been defeated at the Revolution. Many of the Episcopalian clergy were violently driven out of their churches and manse in 1689 by Presbyterian mobs. Others were gradually forced out by the Presbyterian Church courts in the years after 1690.

Their flocks, however, often remained loyal to their persecuted Episcopalian pastors and bishops. The victorious Presbyterians now expected the State to support them in forcing the Episcopalians to give up their erroneous beliefs.

But the state now had no zeal for the work of imposing religious uniformity. This was in part because the Episcopalians, while an outlawed minority in Scotland, were the established Church in England, Scotland's partner after 1707.

There was also a new mood among politicians, associated with the Enlightenment, which viewed religious persecution as backward and uncivilised. In 1712, against the angry protests of the Church of Scotland, the new British Parliament imposed a Toleration Act on Scotland, granting the Episcopalians a limited freedom of worship.

Yet another fissure came in 1730, when after a long process the



■ Ebenezer Erskine felt the Kirk was being corrupted by worldliness.

Church of Scotland deposed the minister of Tealing, John Glas (1695-1773), who had come to the view that the Church should have no connection with the State.

Glas and his followers then established congregations through the Lowlands, seeking to revive the theology and liturgy of the primitive Church, with particular emphasis on simplicity in worship and charitable activity. These Glasites were a small, gentle sect of about 1,000 members.

A more significant schism from the national Church came after 1733, with the Secession of Ebenezer Erskine and his supporters. Erskine was of tough

Covenanting stock, in the 1680s, his father had nearly perished on the Bass Rock for his adherence to the Covenants. Ebenezer had become Church of Scotland minister of Portmoak, near Kinross, in 1703. He knew sorrow, losing his wife and several of his children to disease around 1720. He also grew bitter over what he viewed as a growing laxity in doctrine and discipline within the Church.

The triumph of Presbyterianism had not, he believed, brought a godly commonwealth. Rather, the Church was being corrupted by worldliness.

For Erskine, the main cause of this



The 1767 General Assembly in action taken from a contemporary engraving

creeping w...
institution... 2 the
British Parham... an Act
imposing ta...
Church. This meant a patron
generally a men... ended
gentry and a...
Crown. had... the
minister to... the
event of a vacancy.

Soon put...
their legal...
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In 1731... a
sermon... orth
and Strin...
denounced... and the
lax discipl...
Church. In...
was becoming... the
wealthy patron...

"The man... and
gay clothing is... the
man with the vile raiment and poor
attire", he said.

His fellow clerics...
by such language...
because it was too true...
demanded Erskine's...
denunciations. When he refused...
Erskine and three of his supporters...
were deposed from the ministry...
the Church of Scotland.

But they did not fade away...
Rather, they met at Gairne's Bridge
near Kinross, and constituted
themselves an 'Associate
Presbytery', a pure Presbyterian

Church, separated from what they
viewed as a corrupted establishment.

The four were soon joined by
others who shared their
uncompromising zeal. They showed
their colours when the English
evangelical preacher, George
Whitefield, visited Scotland in 1741.

They demanded he restrict his
preaching to them, as God's people.
Whitefield insisted his mission was
to save the 'devil's people' so they
had nothing further to do with him.

The Secession Church, as it was
called, was itself split into two
separate bodies in 1747, following a
dispute over whether or not
Christians should take the 'Burgess
Oath' that was required of all local
officials following the '45.

The more moderate body, made
up of those prepared to take the
oath, became known as the 'Burgher'
Secession Church. The stricter
members, those unwilling to take
the oath to an 'uncovenanted' state,
became the 'Anti-burgher' Secession
Church. Despite the split, both
branches of the Secession Church
steadily grew.

In 1752, the patronage question
led to still another break from the
established Church. In that year, the
General Assembly of the Church of
Scotland deposed the gentle Thomas
Gillespie from the ministry. It was
an unpleasant business. Gillespie's
crime had been to refuse to
participate in the ordination of an
unpopular patron's candidate as a
parish minister. The dominant

pre-patronage party in the Church
wanted to make an example of
someone as a means of ending all
resistance to patronage, and
Gillespie seemed an easy victim.

Gillespie might have done what
others unhappy with patronage were
doing, and made his way into either
the Burgher or Anti-Burgher
Secession Church.

But he was a man of liberal
theological views, very different
from the exclusive piety prevailing
in the Secession Churches.

His congregation remained loyal
to him and they invited ministers
and congregations with similar views
to join them. Gillespie offered to
share communion with all those who
held to the headship of Christ, an
unusually open view for the time. By
1761, Gillespie and his supporters
had formed the 'Relief Church',
offering relief from patronage, and
their Church grew steadily.

The last decade of the
18th century witnessed yet another
significant secession. In 1795, the
brothers James and Robert Haldane,
Church of Scotland laymen from a
wealthy landowning family,
experienced conversions and
decided to devote themselves to a
home mission among the poor.

James Haldane began itinerant
preaching through the north of
Scotland, and in 1798 he and his
brother formed a Society for
Propagating the Gospel at Home to
support other itinerant preachers.

This unauthorised mission aroused

opposition in the Church of
Scotland, which in 1799 issued a
Pastoral Admonition against the
Itinerants. The Haldanes now broke
with the established Church,
becoming Independents and joined
by a number of supporters.

By 1800 Scotland was home to a
host of different Christian
denominations. Perhaps 20 per cent
of the population were now outside
the national Church.

The vision of Scotland as a unified
Christian commonwealth under an
authoritative national Church was
fading.

Outside observers would criticise
the Scots for being a stubborn,
theologically-contentious people,
and cast a mocking eye on such sects
as the Cameronians, Glasites or
Anti-burghers.

Some of this criticism was
probably deserved. But out of the
stubborn resistance of these sects to
the established Church, a more
liberal Scotland was emerging.

This was, to be sure, not the
intention of many of the seceding
groups. If they had had the power,
they may well have wished to
persecute. But no Church, not even
the established Church, possessed
such power in the 18th century, and
as a result the Churches had to learn
to live with one another.

Eighteenth-century Scotland saw
the dream of the godly
commonwealth fade, but a more
diverse, open and dynamic society
emerge. ●

Drink and be merry all day, all night. Hic!



■ A good, noisy, drunken night at the tavern, so come away in. The round is yours.

Some drink, some pubs, some experience. But the ale at John Dowie's tavern could glue your lips together

Heavy drinking in the taverns and boisterous supper parties in the many social clubs which abounded in the dark, narrow closes of the Old Town gave Edinburgh a reputation for fine hospitality and entertainment

Many 18th century visitors commented on the drunkenness which was accepted as a way of life. 'Tavern dissipation' prevailed to an incredible extent, according to Robert Chambers, chronicler extraordinaire of the city. It

engrossed the leisure hours of all professional men 'scarcely excepting even the most stern and dignified'

In the morning you would find men 'of high rank and dignity' reeling home from a close in the High Street after a night spent drinking.

Often judges would clamber unsteadily to the bench in Parliament Hall, still drunk from the night's imbibing. In 1704, Lord Neave, in his last year, drank six bottles of wine and could hardly handle the business.

better his clerk affirmed that the best paper he ever heard Lord Newton dictate was after a debauch.

And to help their lordships through their judicial business many had a decanter of claret or port by their side to sip with a biscuit while listening to an argument.

As the business went hand in hand. In the hostelrys, merchants and tradesmen sealed their bargains over a glass. Advocates would meet at the bar and by etiquette the member of the bar (advocate) chose the morning drink, often sherry,

before business was discussed. If a case was won they could later be seen in one of the taverns celebrating. So essential was this convivial process that the first and last items in a lawyer's account were the tavern bill, we are told.

The city magistrates would meet in a tavern to 'splice the rope' – discuss details of a forthcoming hanging – and for long it was their custom to hold the 'Deid-chack', a dinner at the expense of the city, in Peter Williamson's tavern, after attending an execution.

The Lord Provost also originally entertained the city's guests in one of the drinking howffs.

When the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland gathered in Edinburgh, the Lord High Commissioner held receptions in Clerihew's or Fortune's Inn, and hosted dinner parties there.

Business could be an excuse for a dram, but 18th-century Scotland was generally a hard-drinking society. Both Edinburgh and Glasgow had the habit of taking a 'meridian' just before noon – a glass to keep folk going to top up what had been drunk for breakfast.

Glasgow at one time in the 18th century had a reputation for its seriousness even to the surgeons who met patients, the merchants with their suppliers and the lawyers and judges who conferred over a glass of ale, brandy or claret.

Pious and sober as the district, the citizens would amuse their drams by saying a grace for them and a minister, if present, would be respectfully asked to ask a blessing or 'say a few words' which he did at considerable length before they partook of a substantial meal of claret. This was the proper preliminary to setting a horse or a supply of Kilmarnock ponies. It is reported of Glasgow:

'A cauld cock and a feather – a glass of brandy and a bunch of raisins lifted the spirits of many a townsman in Edinburgh before he considered his meal.'

One of the best-known of the capital's taverns was John Dowie's in Libberton Wynd, celebrated for dispensing Younger's Edinburgh Ale 'which almost glued the lips of the drinker together'.

A great portion of this house was literally without light, consisting of a series of windowless chambers, decreasing in size till the last was a mere box, of irregular oblong figure, jocularly, but not inappropriately,

designated the Coffin Chambers.

From the early 18th century, the men of the city would spend hours in what may, by comparison, be described as genteel conviviality.

Dowie, whose customers included the poets Robert Fergusson and Robert Burns, offered for supper: 'A bit of toasted cheese, crumb o' tripe, dish o' peas, the season fitting, An egg, or cauler frae the seas, A fleuk or whiting.'

Burns, nearing his death, remorsefully talked of Edinburgh tavern life as contributing to the shortening of his days.

The bard was a habitué during his Edinburgh visits of many hostleries, including Dawney Douglas's Tavern in Anchor Close, off the High Street, where a club called the Crochallan Fencibles gathered.

Many distinguished citizens were members – men like the economist Adam Smith, writer Henry Mackenzie, the judges Lords Hailes and Monboddo, and Alexander Smellie, printer of the first edition of Encyclopaedia Britannica.

These clubs where men gathered for lively conversation, eating and drinking, included one called the Pious. It attracted 'decent, orderly citizens,' who met every night in a pie-house, hence the club's name.

One of its members, called Lind,

weighed at least 15 stones and was known for his drinking.

At the Water Gate, the Cancengate to Castlehill at the top of today's Royal Mile. And the wine he'd swallowed was enough to float a 74-gun warship.

The Boar Club attracted wild men of fashion – the members were boars, their room in Shakespeare Square was a sty, and they put their fines into a stoneware pig.

Other clubs included the Dirty, where no gentleman was to appear in clean linen; and the Odd Fellows, where members wrote their names upside down. Members of the Sweating Club had a lively form of entertainment – after getting drunk they spilled onto the streets late at night and attacked anyone they saw, chasing and jostling their victim and making him sweat.

While the clubs were very much male-dominated, women were not excluded from roisterous nights-out. They were welcome in the cellar oyster-bars where large helpings of the delicacies from the rich beds of the Forth were liberally washed down with drink, then brandy was placed on the table and dancing started.

Many inns were presided over by landladies, known as 'luckies', some of whom are hailed in the poems of Fergusson and Allan Ramsay. The

latter were regulars at the good listeners, long used to hearing many a sorrowful tale of a broken heart.

Pudding Lizzie at Jock's Lodge, then well outside the town, was famous for her mealie puddings and specialised in 'Popish whisky' – rum sold under that name to avoid tax.

While Maggie Johnston served a potent home-brew in her tavern on the edge of Bruntsfield Links.

One of the best-known (and refined) of them all was Luckie Fykie, who operated in premises in the Potterrow where she ran an 'a' things' shop and had her home.

The widowed Mrs Flucker or Flockhart – 'a neat, little, thin, elderly woman, usually habited in a plain striped blue gown, and apron of the same stuff, with a black ribbon round her head and lappets under her hair' – put out three bottles of brandy, rum and whisky on a bunker seat, glasses and a salver of gingerbread biscuits. Her clientele were lawyers, bankers and other 'men of importance in society', mostly living in George Square.

The changing city life-style in the 18th century with the foundation of the New Town in Edinburgh and the commercial expansion of Glasgow, eventually signalled 'last orders' for the dark, convivial tavern life. ●



■ The douce Edinburgh's city Chambers, once the site of the Royal Exchange, but inside and below ground in the haunted Mary King's Close was the hard-drinking Royal Exchange Coffee House of the 1770s.

A rope for rape, the hot iron for beggars

The rule of law was difficult to uphold without a police force. It bent in the wind for the privileged and the hell of the tolbooth was a major deterrent for ordinary folk



The church played a major role in controlling the masses and therefore the ordination of elders was an important function to be taken seriously — as depicted by artist John Henry Lorimer.

In 1681 Viscount Stair published *Institutions of the law of Scotland* which was the first real attempt to formulate and set out the principles of Scots law.

Law in Scotland is based on the Roman or European system, which is founded on principles, rather than as the case in England and the United States where it is based on precedent.

The European influence was very important in the 18th century and some 1,500 Scottish students studied law at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.

Law was also important in defining who the Scots were especially after the Treaty of Union was passed in 1707. Unlike many other European nations which experienced a political union in the

early modern period, the Scots kept their own system of law and this clearly defined where Scotland was.

The system of law has been one of the most important factors in maintaining the psychological border between Scotland and England and ensured that over time there was no blurring and inter-mixing between the different people and territory which so often happens in other 'stateless' nations in Europe. The Anglo-Scottish border of today is exactly where it was 300 years ago thanks to the existence of Scots law.

The legal profession was one of the most important sections of Scottish society in the 18th century. Lawyers were needed to conduct business transactions, oversee land sales, assess who was qualified for

the vote, manage and run landed estates, ensure hereditary succession and give advice on a wide range of affairs which were necessary for the successful conduct of a gentleman.

Needless to say, the legal profession worked hand-in-hand with the landed gentry and generally sought to protect their privileged position. After all, the eminence of the lawyer in society was dependent on the business provided by the landed class.

As we have seen, many of the key figures in the Scottish Enlightenment were drawn from the legal profession and they used their considerable intellectual powers to justify and uphold the existing regime.

After the abolition of the Scottish

Secretary in 1747 following the last Jacobite Rebellion, the senior judge, the Lord Advocate, was given the task of overseeing the business of government in Scotland. The Lord Advocate was able to dispense government patronage which gave him considerable power.

It is no surprise to find that two of Scotland's key political players in the 18th century, Andrew Fletcher or Lord Milton, who was the 3rd Duke of Argyll's right hand man, and Henry Dundas or Viscount Melville, who had the Scottish political star shining in his pocket by the 1760s, were both drawn from the legal profession.

Also, in an era which was dominated by the great landed class, entry into the legal profession



attended
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 ambitious
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 Law
 Scotland

Sheriffs were
 to deal with a
 raucous and run

Riots could be
 introduction of
 the Malt tax in
 action by city
 shooting of rioters
 Porteous Riot in
 a steep rise in
 imposition of an
 on a local church,
 legislation such

allow Catholic Toleration in 1779

The legal establishment had no effective police force and troops and city guards were the only means available to quell public disturbances

Riots could last for several days, either because the troops were insufficient to the task and had to wait on reinforcements or because there were none stationed in the locality

The symbols of authority were the ones most likely to be singled out for special treatment by the mob. Provosts' homes were attacked, troops assaulted and customs officers in the east were roughed up

Even the moderator of the General Assembly in 1779, William Robertson, had to go into hiding to

escape the wrath of the mob who were incensed that he supported Toleration for Catholics

Given that law enforcers had limited means of control and that the mob was capable of incendiary action, there was a premium placed on trying to ensure social stability

Sheriffs in Scotland had the powers to intervene in the setting of wages and prices if it was felt to be necessary. After all, it was no skin off their noses if merchants and tradesmen were forced to shell out to keep the peace

It was a peculiar alliance between those who maintained the status quo and those at the bottom of the social scale. The lower orders occasionally got better wages and lower prices, the elite got social stability and the

middle class paid for it

The crimes of individuals were many and varied and until the mid-18th century, Scotland had a hotch-potch of a legal system. The Highlands and some parts of the lowlands were covered by what was known as 'heritable jurisdictions' until they were abolished in 1747

With the exception of capital crimes—treason, murder, rape and arson (which had to be tried in Edinburgh), local landowners had the power to dispense justice as they saw fit. Tenants could be held in the local tolbooth (a building that housed the burgh council, court and prison) for petty crimes, in order to serve as an example to others.

The Kirk did much to uphold morality in the countryside and the



■ Parliament House in Edinburgh was the arbiter of justice as this 18th-century engraving shows – and it remains so today.

Hanging was the final deterrent. It brought out the crowds. Deacon Brodie attracted hundreds to his donated gallows

Elders were the self-appointed guardians of good living. Fines were imposed for swearing and drunkenness, although their most feared weapon was the stool of repentance where the offender was made to stand in front of the congregation and recount his or her sins and pray for forgiveness. It was a very public form of naming and shaming.

Up to the mid-18th century it was still perfectly permissible to brand illegal beggars on the forehead with a hot iron. Again this was a way of publicly identifying a criminal so that all could see.

Beggars who were able-bodied and could work and were caught

begging out of the parish of their birth were deemed to be a public nuisance. The main objective behind this punishment was to stop travelling bands of beggars plaguing the countryside.

In the towns and cities crimes of petty thieving, fornication, bad conduct and assault were punished by fines or imprisonment in the tolbooth.

The wealthy, naturally, if they were not able to buy off the complainant and there was every incentive to do so in order to preserve a gentleman's reputation, could easily pay the fine.

The 'young bucks' of the aristocracy were frequently getting themselves into trouble for accumulating debts, whoring, 'ravishing young wenches' which was a euphemism for rape – and other misdemeanors associated with high spirits and had to rely on senior members of the family to bail them out.

Also, the courts were more likely to believe the word of a gentleman rather than someone of the lower orders. That the legal

system favoured the wealthy was reinforced by the fact that most ordinary Scots feared the law.

As far as they were concerned, it was not associated with upholding justice, but rather with inflicting punishment.

To be incarcerated in the tolbooth was one of the most unpleasant experiences on offer in Scottish society at that time.

The keepers were paid out of the collection of fines and it was in their own best interests to make sure that the stay was as unpleasant as possible for the prisoner.

This was designed to encourage relatives to come up with the money as quickly as possible.

With little or no sanitation, filthy, damp, dark and filled with the refuse of society, prisoners believed that they were being left to rot.

Punishments were delivered in public to show that justice was being served and also to act as a deterrent.

Serial fornicators could find themselves placed in the stocks at the market square where moral citizens would vent their disapproval at such willful sinners.

Public caning was also a common

other petty crimes, particularly on the young who would be taught their lesson in full public gaze.

Hanging was the ultimate form of punishment and would draw large crowds.

Edinburgh's Deacon Brodie, who was a respectable citizen by day and cat burglar by night, attracted hundreds at his execution in 1788.

It was especially popular because he had, in a mood of civic responsibility and to reflect his respectable status, gifted the city a set of gallows which were now to be used for his own execution.

Prisoners were paraded through the streets on their way to the spot of execution so that the crowds could jeer and taunt the condemned man. It was customary for the condemned to recant and plead forgiveness for his sin before taking the plunge.

Many were defiant, however, and a drummer was always present to drown out the noise so that it was obvious to all.

In the 18th century, government officials were interested in the anatomy of the human body, particularly the

Exploring the world beneath the waves

Scotland has always relied on the sea, and Deep Sea World is the place to learn about life in the waters off our coasts



The sea has always played an important role in Scotland's history. It was the main route for the development of Da Rìgh, the early kingdom of the Scots, through contact with people from other lands – some friendly, some war-like.

Viking raiders sailed across the North Sea to plunder and pillage the settlements of the early Scots and Picts, but stayed to become woven into the fabric of the nation.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the sea trade with Scandinavia and the Low Countries brought much wealth. Later, in the 19th century, the whaling industry helped the growth of east coast ports, such as Dundee and Aberdeen.

Scotland's connection with the sea continued with the great shipbuilding tradition of the Clyde and right up to the present day with the North Sea oil boom and the ferry routes that provide vital lifelines to the Western and Northern Islands.

Throughout the centuries, of course, the waters around our coasts have been a vital source of food – and, until recently, fishing has been one of our most important industries.

But what do we know about the waters surrounding Scotland, to

say nothing about the oceans of the world? And what about the creatures that inhabit the seas?

Now you can find out about life beneath the waves at Deep Sea World, in North Queensferry.

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You will come face to face with Europe's largest collection of sand tiger sharks and be able to watch divers hand feed a spectacular array of sea life.

Children (of all ages) will enjoy touching the live exhibits in the large touch pools.

You can visit the stunning

Amazonian Experience, with ferocious piranhas and electrifying eels, and The Amazing Amphibians Display that features the world's most poisonous frog – the golden dart frog, poisonous enough to kill 10 men.

For the adventurous, there are animal handling sessions, including snakes.

There's an incredible collection of fascinating creatures – sea horses, octopus, wolf fish and (for the brave) there's the Dangerous Animals Tank.

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■ **Aquamazing:** Deep Sea World is one of Scotland's top visitor attractions, and has much to interest all ages.



■ **Life beneath the waves:** at Deep Sea World, you will come face to face with giant rays and menacing sharks.

Promise of greatness tragically cut short

The Mearns and its folk put magic into the pen of James Mitchell

In a short but eventful life, Lewis Grassie Gibbon was becoming recognised in his 30s as one of Scotland's most significant writers of the 20th century. But he died at the age of 34, robbing us of a unique stylist whose finest novels chronicled social change in the North East, as Scotland moved on from being what was still basically a rural society.

Another great Scots writer, Neil Gunn, said of Gibbon's style: "I don't think I have ever before had the illusion that the earth itself has a voice."

Gibbon's best work was written when he lived in Welwyn Garden City, outside London – far from the landscapes of Aberdeenshire and the Mearns which inspired him during his childhood and youth.

His real name was James Leslie Mitchell, and he was born in 1901 at his father's farm, Seggat of Auchterless. When he was eight the family moved to another farm near Drumlithie, Kincardineshire, in the Mearns country, and the boy was educated at the local school and then at Mackie Academy in Stonehaven. He was later to marry a girl he met at school.

James's first jobs were in journalism, working on a daily newspaper in Aberdeen and then in Glasgow with the *Scottish Farmer*. There are contradicting accounts of what happened next. According to one, he was dismissed in 1919 for fiddling his expenses, attempted to commit suicide and returned home.

Intriguingly, a second account is that he was dismissed because of his 'Marxist convictions', because he had apparently joined the Communist Party around that time.

A third version is that he went home because of illness. But he

■ Home in the Mearns with his father, wife and daughter – but for James Mitchell, rural life was unbearable.

never worked as a journalist and enlisted in the army, serving with the Royal Army Service Corps for more than three years in India and Egypt.

He returned to Scotland for what were described as a few restful months before poverty compelled him to sign up again, this time as clerk in the Royal Air Force.

By the time he left that service in 1929, going to live in Welwyn Garden City, he had started writing short stories. The first, 'For Iron Sake', an adventure yarn based on his experiences of Egypt, was rejected several times, after which he sent it in desperation to H G Wells.

The great writer replied encouragingly that Mitchell "could do this sort of thing well", and the story was finally published in the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1927.

As a result, Mitchell was taken up by the magazine's editor, Leonard Huxley, who bought a sequence of other short stories in the same

setting. In 1931 these were to be collected in a book entitled 'Calends of Cairn'. But Mitchell's first book, published in 1928, was a non-fiction work on archaeology and anthropology, entitled 'Hanno: or The Future of Exploration'.

He had become interested in these subjects during his service abroad, and is regarded as a 'diffusionist' believing in the idea that the movement of populations around the world caused a whole range of cultural similarities.

Although Mitchell was entirely self-taught as an anthropologist, his book was commissioned by the editors of a literary series called 'Today and Tomorrow'. This was when his literary career took off, yet he was still to reach the heights.

During the next seven years when he published as many as 10 books and numerous articles, he wrote at first under his own name.

His first two novels, 'Stained Radiancy' and 'The Thirteenth

Disciple', were well received, one critic praising him with great foresight as "a writer who will have a very definite influence on the thought and literature of the 20th century."

In 1932 Mitchell published 'Sunset Song'. This was the first novel in a superb trilogy about the Mearns – an old Scots word for the hills – simply, a length of writing.

The two other novels that followed were 'The Silver Chair' and 'The Green Gables'. And for this trilogy he used the pen name Lewis Grassie Gibbon, taken from his mother's maiden name. These secured his place as one of Scotland's literary greats. In 1933 he traced the movement of a farm family through the Mearns through childhood, marriage and widowhood to life in the city.

They have become recognised as masterpieces of the English language.

But just a year after his trilogy was completed, the writer died of a perforated ulcer. ●





■ Dorothy Dunnett has reached the top in several careers.

Dorothy, the past master

A 16-century Scots mercenary soldier called Lymond brought her cult status

Writer, portrait painter, sculptress and former civil servant, Dorothy Dunnett is a woman of many careers. But it is her meticulously researched historical novels that have brought her most fame, with her world wide readership forming a Dorothy Dunnett Convention

Born in Dunfermline, Fife, in 1923, she was educated in Edinburgh before studying art in Edinburgh and Glasgow. She was a civil service press officer for six years before working at the Scottish Economics Department until 1955. In 1946 she married the late Sir Alistair Dunnett who was later destined to become editor of The Scotsman newspaper

Meanwhile, her paintings were

being accepted for exhibition at the Royal Scottish Academy and her first in a series of historical novels, known as 'The Lymond Chronicles', was published in 1961

These romances followed the fortunes of a fictional Scottish 16th century mercenary soldier called Francis Crawford of Lymond, set mainly in France. A second series, called 'The House of Niccolo', and set in the 15th century, found the author researching historical background in France, Flanders and Venice, with the first title published in 1986

She is a prolific writer with more than 20 books to her credit. Some of these, a series of detective novels, were published under her maiden name of Dorothy Halliday.

School bully to bestseller

Flash of genius brought writing fame for George MacDonald Fraser

It was a master stroke to pluck a character called Harry Flashman from the Thomas Hughes classic 'Tom Brown's Schooldays'. In this semi autobiographical account of 19th-century life at Rugby School, Flashman was expelled for bullying

George MacDonald Fraser recreated him as a great Victorian anti-hero, who bought a commission in the British army and achieved steady promotion despite being a coward, a bully and a seducer. The 'Flashman' series gave an ironic look at the class system in the

... in 1925, ... family to ...

the Gordon Highlanders. From 1947, he and his Canadian born wife worked as journalists, spending a year in Canada on the same newspaper - he a crime reporter and she a theatre critic

Earlier, he worked briefly as a "singularly unsuccessful" encyclopaedia salesman

Back in Scotland, Fraser became deputy editor of the Glasgow Herald in 1968. But the following year, when his first novel 'Flashman' became an instant success, he left to become a full-time author, taking his family to live on the Isle of Man

Fraser has also written on his own war experiences in 'Quartered Safe Out Here', and his screen writing credits include the 1983 James Bond ...



■ George MacDonald Fraser found fertile ground in scoundrel Harry Flashman.

ROB SURVIVED BY WITS AND SWORD

Chieftain, rustler, blackmailer, spy and hero, his 'children of the mist' owed him their very lives

A street census asking people to name the best known Highlander of all time would probably produce a majority result in favour of Rob Roy MacGregor, who is sometimes disparagingly described as 'that Highland rogue'

There is a modern statue of him in royal Stirling, a town whose council would have been glad to have seen him strung up in past times. Rob Roy is shown as a small man with very long arms and wielding a sword. We do not know precisely how he looked, but that he was hardy, strong and courageous is not in doubt.

Rob Roy is sometimes compared to Robin Hood and there is a slight similarity in that both are folk heroes and both stole from the rich and gave to the poor, but there the similarity ends. Robin Hood is a shadowy and possibly mythical figure, while Rob Roy is very much flesh and blood and his life well documented.

He has sometimes been described as an outlaw and that is true from the point of view of his enemies, but he was also a heroic leader of a

section of his much persecuted clan and he outwitted two dukes and the British Army and died, surprisingly, in his bed on January 31, 1734, at Inverlochlarig Beag at the head of Balquhadder glen (pronounced Bal-whidder). He was 63 and people came from all over the Highlands to his funeral. With his death an era ended.

He is buried in the old kirkyard at the Kirkton in Balquhadder – so is his wife, Mary, and two of his sons. Sir Walter Scott, who wrote a popular novel about Rob Roy, erroneously called her Helen.

A centuries-old Celtic stone slab was placed over Rob's grave, possibly as a protection against wolves, but more likely because it was thought fitting to give his grave a 'memorial cover' from historic times.

Modern members of the Clan Gregor Society and descendants of MacGregors from many lands still pay homage there and some put little pine fronds on the grave, the plant badge of the clan.

Contrary to Victorian romanticism, plant badges did not tend to be clan badges of identification, but were charms or talismans and in the

MacGregors case the pine symbolises tenacity, strength and deep roots.

The name Roy derives from the Gaelic *ruadh*, meaning red. He was part of a famous clan, Clan Alpin or Clan Gregor, who claimed descent from Scottish kings. They owned lands at Glen Strac, near Loch Awe, in Argyll, and an early friendship with the ambitious Campbells turned sour. They were pushed eastwards and settled in Balquhadder, the Trossachs, Glen Lyon, and around Loch Rannoch.

The Privy Council considered them the worst behaved clan in the Highlands, but the MacGregors were in the survival game. Flanked by powerful and covetous clans, they acted like a small buffer state today. Sometimes they negotiated with skill, at other times with swords.

Rob Roy came from a clan which at one time had experienced its very name being banned. A bounty was paid for MacGregor heads and mastiffs were imported from Italy to hunt them down.

They were forbidden weapons and assembly in numbers. Their womenfolk could be branded and their children taken away. Persecution of the MacGregors, the 'Children of the Mist', came close to ethnic cleansing.

Rob Roy was born in Glen Gyle, on the shores of Loch Katrine, in the Trossachs. His father was a



leading MacGregor and his mother a Campbell. He was skilled with weapons and in hillcraft and was only 18 when he fought under Viscount Dundee at the battle of Killiecrankie in 1689, the first of the Jacobite battles.

He took part in an activity which gave a new word to many languages, blackmail. He and other clans said to Lowland lairds that if they paid protection money they would not steal their cattle and would stop other people from doing the same. Blackmail derives from the colour of many, but not all, of the small, shaggy Highland cattle of long ago and from nefarious deeds. Mail is a Scots and Gaelic word for rent or payment.

Liam Neeson's 1995 film 'Rob Roy' and Walt Disney's 1953 version 'Rob Roy, the Highland Rogue', have the flavour of the times, but they are a mixture of fact and fiction. In 1693 he married Mary Campbell of Comer, now a hill farm at the back of Ben Lomond, and rose to become the de facto leader of a section of his clan.

Rob was a natural commander and had great organisational skills. He acquired land on Loch Lomond-side and rented ground in Balquhider. He prospered as a cattle dealer and borrowed money to expand. Rob's chief drover absconded with his funds and his enemies gave him no time to recover. He was falsely accused of embezzlement and orders were issued for his arrest. He was outlawed and his wife and family evicted from their Loch Lomond-side home by the Duke of Montrose's factor, Graham of Killearn.

The Earl of Breadalbane, who hated Montrose, took pity on Rob and gave him land in Glen Dochart, in Perthshire, and from there and in the Trossachs he raided his enemies, stealing cattle, sheep and goats. He intensified his blackmail activities. He helped poor people who were being harried by evil men.

Rob Roy led Clan Gregor during the 1715 Jacobite Rising and an old canard that he held back from the fighting at the Battle of Sheriffmuir has been laid by new scholarship. He was accused of high treason and one of his homes was burned by imported Swiss mercenaries. The Duke of Argyll, head of the powerful Campbells, who also disliked Montrose, gave Rob some land and respite.

But his raiding increased and so did the tales about him. He fell foul of the Duke of Atholl and raided his lands. He twice escaped from imprisonment. Once Rob was tied to a horse when crossing a river, however he managed to cut the belt that held him and dived in to the water.

His clan might have had to take cover names. They might lose their lands temporarily, have their cattle taken and their homes burned, but Rob Roy kept them together as an entity and his fame grew.

He has been accused of being a double-agent during the years after the 1715 Rising, but opinion is divided on the accuracy of this allegation. In 1725 he submitted to General Wade, the Hanoverian Commander-in-Chief of North Britain and famous military roads builder, and was given a royal pardon.

In his later years he converted to Roman Catholicism, partly through his links with the Catholic and Jacobite Drummond family. The town of Callander has a modern visitor centre which tells of his life and Rob Roy's memory is as vibrant as ever. ●



■ Highland warrior: A visitor called as Rob Roy lay on his deathbed, so the dying chief asked his servant to bring his weapons so that no stranger would see a MacGregor unarmed.

Do you measure up to the warrior test?



The mists of time may have obscured the colourful lives of legendary Celtic leader Finn mac Coul and the bard Ossian, but they have left their marks all around the Highlands, writes biker historian David Ross

Ossian recounted the life of the legendary Finn mac Coul, whose name is probably best remembered by Fingal's Cave on the island of Staffa. Finn, or in Gaelic, Fionn, led a band of warriors called the Fianna.

There are many sites in northern Scotland that bear an association with these perhaps mystical days of mighty and heroic deeds.

The place that bears more Fianna connections than any other seem to be Glen Lyon in Perthshire – the longest glen in Scotland. There is a chain of ancient forts the length of Glen Lyon, which are still visible today.

Legend has it that Fionn had two dogs, wolfhounds named Bran and Sceolang, which he used to tether to the Bhacain, a stone shaped like a dog's head standing by the road near the Caisteal coin-a-bhacain, the castle of the dog's stake, in the upper reaches of the glen.

Any youth who wanted to join the ranks of the Fianna had first to prove himself by lifting the Bodach Chraig Fianna, a heavy, rounded stone, up to a nearby rock ledge. Many years ago I made the attempt.

I managed to at least raise it, but the sheer weight made walking impossible. Older now, and stronger, if not wiser, I should return to see if I am now fit to join the ranks of the warriors of Ossian and Fionn's day.

There are several tales centred around the story of Fionn's death, and a standing stone behind the school in Killin, at the head of Loch Tay, is said to mark his burial place. But when the grave was opened some 200 years ago, no skeleton was found.

Other accounts tell of Fionn surrounded by his warriors, sleeping in a cavern in Skye. Once a man stumbled upon the cave by accident and found them slumbering within.

They were giants with huge shields and spears, Fionn in the centre, the largest of all these mighty warriors, waiting for the day when their country would call upon them and



■ Fingal's Cave on Staffa takes its name from Celtic warrior Finn MacCoul.

they would wake to fight again.

High on the north face of Aonach Dubh in Glencoe is the huge black slit of Ossian's Cave. It can be seen from the road at Loch Achtriochtan, like a huge keyhole carved into the rock. It is reached by a rock climb now known as Ossian's Ladder, but the cave runs with water and has a steeply sloping floor, so Ossian probably never occupied it.

The Hermitage, a National Trust for Scotland property on the A9 near Dunkeld, was originally known as Ossian's Hall. It stands above a waterfall on the River Braan, and was originally lined with mirrors.

The noise of the falls in time of spate is somehow magnified by the building itself and that, coupled with the reflections of rushing water in the multitude of mirrors, made it a hall fit for a Fingalian hero.

If you are driving the A9 and happen to be passing after heavy rain, it is well worth stopping and enjoying the half mile or so of forest path leading to The Hermitage and taking in the noise and grandeur created by the design of the building.

This area has an almost magical feel, conjuring images of fairies and other such things kids seem to find fascinating, which is worth bearing in

mind if you are driving your metal box with bored little ones.

Ossian's end came at the Sma' Glen, which carries the A822 north of Crieff. A large boulder between the road and the River Almond is said to be his gravestone, but it has been moved from its original site. It is about 8ft high and 5ft broad.

When it was moved in 1728 by soldiers to make way for one of General Wade's military roads, a cavity about 2ft square was found underneath, lined with stone slabs. It contained some bones and ashes.

It is reported that many of the local people came from miles around with pipes playing, carried away the bones and deposited them in a stone circle in western Glenalmond, where they 'might never more be disturbed by mortal feet or hands'.

It seems our more recent ancestors did not like to see the last resting place of one of our ancient warriors being disturbed. Wordsworth, a well-known fan of Ossianic poetry, wrote of this incident:

*The separation that is here,
Is of the grave and of austere,
Yet happy feelings of the dead;
And, therefore, it is rightly said,
That Ossian, last of all his race,
Lies buried in this lonely place.* ●

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Galleries of Scotland; Edinburgh's New
Town Courtesy of Edinburgh World
Heritage Trust. p12/13 Cromarty
Harbour, Hugh Miller's Cottage and
Cromarty Court House: The Highlands
of Scotland Tourist Board. p14 Robert
Adam: NPG; Register House: Great
Scot, p15/16/17 A Dining Room
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Fotomas. p20/21 Jolly Beggars: SNPG.
p22/23/24 The Orientation of Elders
by John Henry Lorimer and Brawl
Outside an Alehouse by Alexander
Carse: SNPG. p25 Deep Sea World.
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